CIA Tells Of Exotic Weapons

Electric Gun, Untraceable Poison Pellets

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The Central Intelligence Agency spent some $3 million on a secret stockpile of deadly poisons and companion weaponry such as a dart gun that could kill its victims without leaving a trace, CIA Director William Colby acknowledged yesterday.

Testifying calmly in lecture-hall tones, Colby told the Senate intelligence committee that middle-level CIA officials improperly stored away some of the most deadly toxin in 1970 in defiance of an order by President Nixon that such materials be destroyed.

Top officials of the CIA discovered the forbidden cache in an apparently long-neglected vault earlier this year.

The arsenal included not only deadly shellfish toxin reportedly capable of killing "hundreds of thousands" of people, but also strychnine, cobra venom, cyanide pills and other exotic compounds such as 10 pounds of "BZ," a chemical that attacks the central nervous system.

Several dart guns were also found, including a .45 caliber-sized electric gun capable of silently firing poison pellets that would dissolve in a victim before any autopsy could be performed.

One CIA memo made public by the Senate committee described the gun as "a non-discernible microbioinoculator" that could fire accurately at ranges up to 250 feet. Tiny pellets that could carry a half milligram of poison and "capable of being used in a noise-free disseminator" such as the dart gun had also been developed, the October, 1967, memo declared.

The same document disclosed a "vulnerability" study of the New York City subway system to determine "the threat of infection to subway passengers" in a covert biological attack.

The memo, addressed to the chief of the CIA's technical services division, added that the vulnerability study produced information about "methods of delivery which could be used offensively."

At one point during his testimony, Colby said some of the CIA's secret records on the development of the poisons and incapacitating agents—known as Project Naomi—had been destroyed in November, 1972. He also said there was a memorandum of agreement reflecting the destruction of those records between then-CIA Director Richard Helms and the chief of the technical services division, Sidney Gottlieb.

CIA special counsel Mitchell Rogovin said later, however, that Colby "misspoke." Rogovin said there was no such memorandum and that "we have no reason to believe" that any records on Project Naomi were destroyed.

Committee investigators apparently remain skeptical. "We have evidence that there are memos which one would think should exist but which no longer exist," the committee's chief counsel, Fritz Schwarz, told reporters.

Gottlieb, according to Rockefeller Commission sources, was responsible for the destruction of CIA drug-testing records, including the administration of LSD to unwitting

See CIA, A15, Col. 3

CIA Dart Gun Is Disclosed

CIA, From A1

subjects. Rogovin suggested that Colby may have had this in mind when he referred to Project Naomi. As for the memo to Helms, Rogovin said it actually came from the chief of the Army Chemical Corps and simply dealt with the Army's development of various toxins for the [illegible] Ft. Detrick, Md.

The focal point of the [illegible] mony was the nearly 11 [illegible] —approximately half an [illegible] —of shellfish [illegible] that [illegible] found along with [illegible] nine and other [illegible] in an 8-by-10 foot storage [illegible] at the CIA's "Search Laboratory" [illegible] tory, a building near the State Department [illegible]

Emphasizing the [illegible] Nelson, [illegible] chairman Frank Church (D-Idaho) said that Carl Duckett, head of the CIA's directorate [illegible] [illegible] Nixon [illegible] chemical warfare [illegible] followed [illegible] [illegible] high [illegible] officials [illegible] the stockpile at Ft. [illegible] the shellfish [illegible] the de- [illegible] with. My [illegible] [illegible] said the [illegible] di- [illegible]

[illegible] for plans in 1970 [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] of the requirement [illegible] [illegible] material [illegible] Colby testified.

They recall that clear instructions were given that the stockpile should be destroyed by the Army and that in accordance with presidential directives, the agency should get out of the [illegible] (biological warfare) business, he said.

The former CIA scientist responsible for hiding the shellfish toxin away, Nathan [illegible] don of Silver Spring, testified, however, that he never got the word.